

March 7, 2022

Connecticut General Assembly  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: HB 5300

Dear Esteemed Senator Slap, Representative Elliott and Esteemed Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committees:

My name is Marcus Lawson, and I am a Professor of History at Capital Community College, and I am providing testimony in support of the Act Requiring Legislative Approval for the Merger of Institutions within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and Prohibiting the Consolidation of the Regional Community Colleges. Much has been made of the potential benefits that will come from a consolidation, and much concern should continue to be held for the merger of institutions within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities. I might add that as someone who has worked for the Connecticut Community Colleges as both an adjunct and now tenured professor. I can't see how the consolidation will benefit the most important individuals who attend our institutions: students.

Student success is predicated upon access to dedicated faculty and the staff who serve students. As a faculty member who is approaching my twentieth year working for the State of Connecticut in the community college system. I have witnessed changes to our contract that at present leaves me concerned about access to our students. As our present contract requires a certain amount of office hours for student access and the opportunity for me as a faculty member to advise students. If the consolidation continues in the direction it is going. I fear that I will lose access. It is important for me to provide student advising, so that I can keep students on track to graduate, and so that I can also ensure that any student registered in my courses are afforded every opportunity to succeed. The present contract allows up to 3 hours for office hours, and it also allows us to use office hours as additional responsibilities. I usually give between 7 to 9 extra office hours, so that I can reach students. If the fact that additional responsibilities are taken away, and we are required to teach a fifth course, then how will students benefit from this? Teaching is more than having classes available. Teaching involves mentorship, so that students who are taking classes from a faculty member are able to:

- 1) Ask questions about course assignments outside of a class setting, so that they can get the help they need individually. Each student has a different learning style;
- 2) Ask questions about their progress in the course face to face either in person or virtually;
- 3) Ask questions in the area of degree completion, so that the faculty member can advise the student through degree audit about remaining course or courses they missed;
- 4) Discover the option of obtaining references from a faculty member whom they formerly or presently took a course. A reference is important, and it should NOT be formulaic, because a reference communicates to the potential employer, internship or transferring institutions that you as a faculty member are acquainted with the student's academic, scholarly capabilities and skillset a student offers to this opportunity.

As a faculty member, I take great pride in giving more. I sit on committees, serve as an advisor to two student clubs, go out to the community as a representative of the College. Prior to the pandemic, I sat on the City of Hartford LGBTQ Commission, and I am still a Commissioner for the City of Hartford's Veteran's Commission. For faculty and staff to have a presence in the community is important; in that it shows that the community that the college resides is also our classroom. We are in essence ambassadors of the college and the State. An ambassador is someone who represents a particular institution's authority and goodwill. I also take great pride as a faculty member getting to know students, and our students are not just from Hartford, CT. We have students from all over the

United States and internationally. Just this afternoon, I was advising one of my advisees about their degree trajectory in history, and how he might use that in International Relations. This advisee is an international student.

My usual method of instruction in giving on time feedback is that I work on Sunday afternoons correcting assignments, because what comes in on Thursday night, Friday, Saturday is corrected on Sunday, so that students who come to class on Monday will see that I already graded submitted assignments. Students are kept abreast of their progress constantly, along with my general advising, and which shows my dedication to serving students. If the consolidation goes through as is, then I lose that personal touch, that opportunity to teach, advise appropriately.

Sincerely,

Marcus G. Lawson, MS  
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